

Summary of Recommendations on Strengthening NGO Board and Council Support to NGOs

Strengthening the NGO Coordination Board

NGO Data Base: Maintaining accurate records of registered NGOs to be publicly accessed through the NGO Board website. The Board can work with the regional networks to complete the mapping and verification process. There is still need for an accurate and current NGO Directory (hard and soft copies); this should be a Board mandate! Need a 2008 version following the completion of the current mapping exercise!

Monitoring and Evaluation: NGO Board should establish a monitoring and evaluation system to enable NGOs and the public to know their contributions to national development in various geographical and content areas.

Donor Information: NGOs require the Board to do research into institutional donors and provide an appropriate data base. Need for an accurate and current directory of approved institutional donors (hard and soft copies). The NGO Board should establish an advisory service to guide donors on priority areas for funding. NGO Board should facilitate the NGO sector to improve their access to government funds.

Information Dissemination to NGOs: Regular dissemination of information to NGOs on National Development initiatives, available governmental resources, policies and programmes involving CSOs (Sessional Paper No 1, 2006, NGO Act, etc.) NGOs case studies and leadership news and views. Quarterly newsletters to NGO members (hard and soft copies). Encourage consistent interaction between the Board and Civil Society. Put in place effective communication mechanism (two-way). Facilitate regular fora (annual or semi-annual) with NGOs in all the regions to improve mutual understanding and flow of information. Board should provide an information leaflet to newly registered NGOs to inform them on their rights and obligations.

Promoting the NGO Sector: NGO Board should play a major role in promoting the work of NGOs to the Government, Business and General Public.

Capacity Building for NGOs: Board should strengthen, encourage and institutionalize capacity building for NGOs in appropriate areas, e.g. registration, how to start NGOs, good governance, reporting and statutory requirements, securing charity status, etc. Guide and improve young and upcoming NGOs.

Creating and Enabling Environment for NGOs: Board should support policies that are more favourable to enabling environment for NGOs. Advocate for the NGO Sector within Government. The NGO Board should consider waiving past penalties and declare a new start for its relationship with registered NGOs. The Board should represent both national and NGO interests to other government departments such as KRA and Immigration. Negotiate with KRA for optimum levels of tax exemptions and facilities to support CSOs. Ensure good collaboration between implementing NGOs & District personnel

More Efficient and Effective Services to NGOs: Collapse of time of issue of registration certificates from 90 to <60 days. Provide on-line services e.g. registration, returns and payments. Decentralization of services should be accelerated (on-going). Service fees, including registration fees, should be reduced to facilitate NGOs. NGO Board should always acknowledge and give feedback to NGOs on their returns.

Work closely with the NGO Council on key Issues: Developing a new NGO Bill and Act to include all CSOs (FBOs, CBOs, NPOs). Close institutional collaboration with NGO Council to be maintained.

Provide guidance and good practice advice to NGOs: INGOs should not represent the local NGO sector in any forum. Put a legal framework in place to ensure international NGOs work through local NGOs on the ground. Provide guidelines for photography of indigenous communities. Provide guidelines and standards to the sector and donors on Salaries, allowances and terms and conditions for staff and board members of NGOs.

Registration: Some participants felt all applicants should be registered without needless bureaucracy, while others felt the regulatory role should be strengthened to avoid and stamp out “bogus” NGOs.

NGO Board should work to establish a basket fund: This fund would consist of GoK and external donor resources, and may be made available to NGOs working on critical national and local development issues.

Strengthening the NGO Council:

We must all support our Council: The NGO Council is as strong as our membership. We need to be associated with the Council, we need to rejoin it. The current Board/Council structure is good for the sector but we have to make it work as designed. It is important to study the code of conduct and rules and regulations and follow those provisions. NGOs should ensure that their annual subscriptions to the NGO Council are paid up. A percentage of these resources should be made available to the regional networks for their activities. Each region should facilitate NGOs from their area to engage with the Council GASS. Council should solicit (remind and invoice) subscriptions from the members.

Improve Communications with NGO members and the NGO Board: NGO Council needs to develop its electronic communication capacity, develop its website and communicate regularly with NGO members. It should produce regular newsletters and other publications: training manuals, good practice guidelines, etc. Features would include changes in the regulatory environment, Council services, good practices, resource mobilization, good governance, strategic planning and information on salary surveys, insurance and NGO suppliers. Links should also be made to international and regional NGO networks and global development initiatives. NGO Council should market itself and its activities to NGOs in all the regions. Improve two-way flow of information flow within Council and its members. NGO Council should represent the NGO Sector interests to GoK.

Promotion of Quality Standards for NGOs: The Council should adopt a set of quality standards for NGO operations, continually update and apply them. Good practice guidelines will be a basis of capacity assessment and enhancement programmes. Move to expel or tame “rogue” NGOs.

Capacity Building Services: The NGO Council should re-establish capacity enhancement services for NGOs, based upon a needs assessment activity. Training, networking, mentoring and advisory activities should be provided in affordable and quality controlled formats for all member NGOs. Basic legal advice on drawing up government instruments: constitutions, contracts and proposal writing. Develop a framework for supporting NGOs in need. Have an advisory body for good NGO practices (programming, governance, management, human resources, finance, etc.)

Support to Resource Mobilization for NGOs: Council to establish basket funds for NGOs, provide information on donors and their requirements, provide resource mobilization capacity for NGOs, and link local NGOs to INGOs, Private and Government Sectors. Provide information on decentralized funds.

Update and apply the code of conduct: The latest version of the NGO Code of Conduct (1995) requires updating and the regulatory mechanism to be reintroduced. Develop a code of conduct for and with INGOs. Disseminate rules and regulations to all NGOs. Review the rules and regulations to ensure equal representation of all regions at the NGO Council (especially the Coast Province).

Council effectiveness and efficiency needs strengthening: The NGO Council should develop and adhere to performance standards. Provide arbitration between NGOs. Provide mediation for the NGO sector. Provide quality services to its members. Transparency and sound financial management systems should be put in place. Council must be accountable to and transparent with its members. It must present externally audited accounts to the GASS on an annual basis.

Dialogue and partnership with the private sector: Council should facilitate and encourage dialogue between NGOs and the Private Sector.

Decentralize services to regions: With the NGO Board decentralizing its services, the NGO Council should do the same. Council must provide effective and qualitative services to its members.

Council to create an enabling environment for strengthening the NGO sector: The NGO Council General Assembly (GASS) should suspend the subscription arrears of NGOs and enable every member to re-engage by paying 2007 dues. Address the leadership wrangles at the Council. Promote unity among the local NGOs. Provide sound and effective leadership (teamwork and collective responsibility). Perceive diversity as an opportunity not a threat. Council must act objectively and professionally (sane). Call for GASS to form a transitional reconciliation committee headed by a non-partisan person (e.g. a retired judge of high court) in preparation for elections to be completed within 21 man days. Give widely disseminated information on election process in time (21 days as per constitution). Review and amend the Council Rules and Regulations to reflect the dynamism of the sector; e.g. form a working committee with a minimum of 10 NGO members elected by each region to form a quorum. Withdraw all cases between members and the council. Remove the culture of impunity to be addressed within the Council. Hold fair and democratic elections; with opportunities for district level NGOs to vote for their officials – can we introduce a delegate system from the region and district level? Hold regular, free and fair elections of all officers. Council should lead by example: follow its own values and guidelines; be a mirror for the sector. Council must be non-partisan in the political arena.

Board and Council Support and Services:

- Both the Board and the Council should develop an effective and efficient MIS
- Both Board and Council should establish regional offices for better services
- Both Board and Council need to work closely with NGO representatives to make appropriate inputs into the new NGO Bill. It was noted that once the Bill reaches parliament there will be little control by people outside. It was noted that many MPs view NGOs as competitors and their perspective may not be friendly.
- The Board only deregisters an NGO after a recommendation from the NGO Council.
- Recommend a pool of affordable auditors to enable small local NGOs to comply with statutory requirements by 31 May each year, consider an alternative audit form to be self-administered by small NGOs who cannot afford an external auditor.
- Provide regular training courses and capacity building forums for all NGOs
- Facility for Board to encourage new NGOs to pay their first Council subscription fees
- Provide standards for monitoring and evaluation which can be assessed and capacity built where appropriate
- Lobby for tax and duty exemption to enable NGOs receive more equipment and materials for their work
- Harmonize the activities of the Board and Council
- Harmonize existing law on registration of CBOs and NGOs
- Provide information on donors, especially international donors which may support their activities
- Waive defaulter fees